GRAMSCI AS A SPATIAL THEORIST

Bob Jessop

This contribution argues that Gramsci's philosophy of praxis involves the spatialization as well as *historicization* of its analytical categories. but also their *spatialization*. These theoretical practices are also deeply intertwined in his "absolute historicism". This argument is useful not only because Gramsci regularly explores geographical themes but also because 'bending the stick in the other direction' enriches our understanding of his overall approach. I do not claim that Gramsci was a geographer *manqué* or was more a geographer than historian. These are disciplinary questions inappropriate to the pre-disciplinary traditions of Italian philosophy and historical materialism and to the political agenda of Italian state formation. Conversely, while it is certainly appropriate to consider, like Said (2001),[1] the import of Gramsci's familiar spatial metaphors, it would be misleading to focus exclusively on these here. For this would divert attention from Gramsci's less obvious but more significant analyses of the inherent spatiality as well as temporality of social relations. This approach had significant practical as well as theoretical implications and is my primary focus here.

Spatializing the Philosophy of Praxis

Gramsci writes that, while everyone is an intellectual, not everyone is an intellectual by social function (1971: 9). One might add that, while everyone has a practical sense of place, space, and scale, not everyone is a geographer by social function. This certainly holds for Gramsci himself. He was a deeply spatial thinker but he did not explicitly prioritize spatial thinking. This may explain both why Gramsci 'did not fully and explicitly develop his geographical insights' (Morera 1990: 89) and why the inherently spatial nature of his thought has been neglected. But he did take geography seriously in various ways. He studied it alongside his major subject of philology at Turin University (passing his geography exam in 1912). He recommended its teaching in primary schools together with reading, writing, sums, and history; and that a potential textbook for party education contain a 'critical-historical-bibliographical examination of the regional situations (meaning by region a differentiated geo-economic organism) (Gramsci 1985: 691). He continued to explore

geology, geography, and geo-politics after leaving university and also taught history and geography in prison following his arrest (Hoare and Smith 1971: CD189, 171; Gramsci 1985: 325, 272). He noted the mass popularity of geographical novels (1985: 590, 617ff); and recommended that Touring Clubs promote national culture by combining geography with sport (1995: 288). He reflected on the geo-political and geo-economic implications of the International Conferences in the 1920s for Italy, Europe, internationalism, and future world politics. And, more generally, he often approached political problems not only in terms of 'structural' factors but also in regional terms (cf. Morera 1990: 149),

These interests reflect his experiences as a Sardinian in the most exploited and oppressed part of the *Mezzogiorno* (Southern Italy) and his movement to Turin, the capital city of Piedmont and the North's industrial centre. They also derive from his reflections on more general influences in Italian economic, political, and cultural development. These include the Vatican's role as a cosmopolitan mini-state situated at the heart of Italy supported by a traditional intellectual elite with a long-established supranational orientation managing for the leaders of Europe; the long-running debate on the Southern Question in Italy (especially following the 1870s); the spatiality of the Risorgimento and the flawed nature of an Italian unification process dominated by the Piedmontese state; the continuing economic and social problems posed by uneven development, dependent development, and, indeed, internal colonialism in Italy; the communists' political problems in breaking the class alliance between northern capital and the southern agricultural landowning class and in building an alliance between the northern workers and southern peasants; the changing nature and forms of imperialism (including the obstacles, challenges, and opportunities involved in the diffusion of Americanism and Fordism in Europe); and the problems for the wider communist movement posed by the Soviet Union's international isolation.

Gramsci's university training in philology under Umberto Bartoli also stimulated his spatial sensibilities. He followed the latter's new approach to linguistics as an historical science concerned with the social regularities of language (Gramsci 1985: 174, 551). Bartoli developed a "spatial" analysis of language that sought to trace "how a dominant speech community exerted prestige over contiguous, subordinate

communities: the city over the surrounding countryside, the ‘standard’ language over the dialect, the dominant socio-cultural group over the subordinate one” (Forgacs and Nowell-Smith 1985: 000). He also charted the continuing flow of *innovations* from the prestigious *langue* to the receiving one, such earlier linguistic forms would be found in a peripheral rather than central area, an isolated rather than an accessible area, a larger rather than a smaller area” (Brandist 1996: 94-5). Gramsci inflected Bartoli’s analysis in a strongly materialist direction and highlighted its practical implications. For he saw the problem of revolution as closely tied to the unification of the people – something that had to pass through the medium of language if a coherent collective will was to emerge that could unify different classes, strata, and groups (cf. Helsloot 1989: 561). The resulting complexities are evident from Gramsci’s analyses of how language use is stratified (e.g., how countryfolk ape urban manners, how subaltern groups imitate the upper classes, how peasants speak when they move to the cities, etc.) (1975: 2342). In short, there is a strong sense of spatiality in Gramsci’s work on language as a medium of hegemony (Lo Piparo 1979, Ives 2004),

These influences suggest, as remarked earlier, that there is more to Gramsci as a spatial theorist than his use of spatial metaphors (on which, see box one). The latter have certainly been influential in the reception of his work but we should also consider his interest in the actual rather than metaphorical spatiality of social relations and practices, in their spatial conditioning, and in their relevance to spatial issues. For Gramsci was not only sensitive to the *historical specificity* of all social relations (Morera 1990: 85) but also to their distinctive *location in place, space, and scale*. Indeed these two are clearly interconnected. Thus I now consider how Gramsci integrates place, space, and scale in his philosophy of praxis. However, because he does this in a largely pre-theoretical manner, these concepts must be defined before illustrating their significance for Gramsci’s theory and practice.

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Box One about here

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Place (or locale) refers to a more or less bounded site of face-to-face relationships and/or other direct interactions among relevant social forces. As such, it can be more or less extensive depending on whether such interactions require the co-presence of named individuals or representative individuals or can be mediated through delegates from relevant organizations or movements. It is generally closely tied to everyday life, has temporal depth, and is bound up with collective memory and social identity. Its boundaries serve both to contain and to connect: they provide a strategically selective social and institutional setting for direct interactions and also structure possible connections to other places and spaces on a range of scales. The naming, delimitation, and meaning of places are always contested and changeable and the coordinates of any given physical space can be connected to a multiplicity of places with different identities, spatio-temporal boundaries, and social significance. Gramsci was sensitive to all of these aspects. The importance of place is stressed in his reflections on folklore, common sense, popular culture, and political practice. It is also illustrated in his discussion of built forms (schools, churches, architecture) and even street names (references). Gramsci also noted the contestability of places, their intertwining with other places, and their links to memory, identity, and temporality (Gramsci 1971: 00-00; 1978: 00-00). Thus Gramsci was interested in folklore because it was characteristic of the subaltern and provincial classes and opposed to official conceptions of the world – it was one way in which subaltern classes rationalized and survived in the world (Landy 1994: 175). Likewise, he explored the social origins of intellectuals in relation to their roots in specific places and spaces rather than in a-spatial class terms. For example, he distinguished between the social functions of *northern* (industrial, technical) and *southern* (rural, organic) intellectuals in building different types of hegemony (1978: 454-5); and observed that traditional Italian intellectuals had historically played a cosmopolitan rather than national role (1985 205). In other situations, intellectuals and political parties could also be the relays of ideas 'borrowed from other national sources' rather than develop an authentic and inclusive national-popular culture (1985 205). Gramsci also argued the social bases of economic policies and strategies -- *laissez-faire, laissez-passer* could not be rooted in agriculture but only in commerce and strong industry. And his analysis of the Southern Question (see below) attaches great significance to the rootedness (or otherwise) of social classes and political and intellectual forces in specific places, spaces, and scales.

Space comprises the socially produced grids and horizons of social life. It offers a whole series of strategically selective possibilities to develop social relations that stretch over space and time. Gramsci considers space from several viewpoints: (a) the territorialization of political power and processes of state formation, (b) the spatial division of labour between town and countryside, between north and south, and between different regional and national economies, and (c) spatial imaginaries and the representation of space. Gramsci did not believe that space exists in itself, independently of the specific social relations that construct it, reproduce it, and occur within it. As a profoundly relational and practical thinker, he was never tempted by such spatial fetishism. Nor did he accept the geographical determinism common in the nineteenth century "scientific" field and still reflected in folklore and common sense – a determinism that regards the physical and/or human environment as the most important determinant of social relations and their historical development. This would have been anathema to Gramsci's philosophy of praxis too.[2] Instead he treated space like history, that is, in relational terms. For example, he regarded historical grammar (philology) comparatively, refusing to confine its development within national boundaries (Ives 1998: 45). He also argued 'that history is always "world history" and that particular histories exist only within the frame of world history" (Gramsci 1985: 181). This is directly comparable to his view that national states are not self-closed 'power containers' but should be studied in terms of their complex interconnections with states and political forces on other scales. Indeed he brings both the temporal and spatial perspectives together in an early form of 'geographical historical materialism' (cf. Harvey 1982).

Scale comprises the nested (and sometimes not so nested) hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size, e.g., local, regional, national, global. Scale is the product of social struggles for power and control. Gramsci was extremely sensitive to issues of scale, scalar hierarchies of economic and political power, and their territorial and non-territorial expressions. Thus he conducted national analyses from an international viewpoint (e.g, the European bourgeoisie aimed to become the leading, dominant class throughout the Continent); he located the Italian revolution in a European context, focusing on Piedmont's attempt to emulate the French bourgeoisie's catalytic role in Europe and to help shape a European historical bloc.

He also analyzed hegemonic relations at the local level, noting, for example, how the urban bloc around Paris dominated other French cities; how Giolitti attempted to form an urban bloc between the northern bourgeoisie and proletariat that could exercise hegemony over the southern Italian rural bloc; and how the modern automobile city of Turin was a healthy and productive but the heavy industrial cities of Lombardy were corrupted by clientelism (Gramsci 1977: 150-3; Portelli 1973: 83-4; Levy 1999: 192). Arguments about different scales of economic, political, intellectual, and cultural organization were also central to his other analyses of historical blocs and, indeed, for individual identity formation. In the latter regard, for example, he noted that Pirandello identified himself as local, national, and European and could only become an Italian and national writer because he had deprovincialized himself and become European (1985: 000). Indeed, far from affirming that there is a simple 'nested hierarchy' of scales from the local to the global with distinct sets of economic, political, and social relations on each scale, Gramsci he was especially sensitive to the ways in which tangled hierarchies of scale acted as a source of economic, political, and socio-economic instability.

Scale dominance is 'the power which organizations at certain spatial scales are able to exercise over organizations at other, higher or lower scales' (Collinge 1999: 568). It can derive from the general relationship among different scales considered as strategically selective terrains of power and domination and/or from the features characteristics, capacities, and activities of organizations located at different scales. One or more scales can gain special socio-political significance by playing the dominant role in the scale division of labour among different social institutions. In turn, nodal scales are non-dominant overall but nonetheless serve as the primary loci for delivering certain activities in a given spatio-temporal order or matrix (Collinge 1999: 569). Finally, subaltern scales are marginal or peripheral but may also become sites of resistance.

Gramsci operates implicitly with such distinctions in analyzing historical and contemporary patterns of domination. For example, he can be interpreted as arguing that, within the nested (or, better, tangled hierarchy) of scales in Italian state- and nation-building, the national level was nodal rather than dominant. In a period when the primacy of the national scale – economically, politically, socio-culturally – was

increasingly taken for granted, at least in the advanced capitalist societies of the 'West'. For Gramsci lived in a conjuncture when, *Italia fatta, bisogna fare gli Italiani* (Italy being made, we must make the Italians). In short, whatever the general importance of the national scale in the international state system, Italy was weakly integrated domestically and the national scale had not yet become dominant over local and regional scales.

Nor was Gramsci unaware of the international weakness of the Italian state and the influence of external factors on its development. For example, the Vatican was not just a local religious institution but a source of Italy's place in the larger world, with Catholicism functioning as a worldwide hegemonic institution, as an imperialistic spirit" (1995: 220-1; cf. Saunders 1998: 181). He was therefore disinclined to regard the national state as the basic unit of international relations. He also recognized the distinction between dominant and nodal scales on a continental as opposed to the world scale. Concerning European and World politics, for example, he wrote:

> These two are not the same thing. In a duel between Berlin and Paris or between Paris and Rome, the winner is not master of the world. Europe has lost its importance and world politics depends more on London, Washington, Moscow, Tokyo than it does on the Continent. (1995: 374).

Thus his analyses of struggles for national hegemony were not confined to the national but closely examined the articulation and, indeed, interpenetration, of the local, regional, national, and supranational scales. Moreover, Gramsci often commented on the 'strategic selectivities' associated with the dissociation of scales across different institutional orders and/or the possibilities of scale jumping (e.g., the history of Italian intellectuals, the disjunction between the increasing formation of the world market and the continued survival of national states). Likewise, he predicted that the diffusion of both Americanism and Fordism (so that they were mutually supportive) could transform economic, political, and socio-cultural relations in Europe. He also identified and elaborated the need for new forms of interscalar articulation to form a new historic bloc and mobilize multiple social forces (e.g., in order to resolve the Southern Question or to enable the Soviet Union to break out of

the isolation produced by Stalin's policy of 'socialism in one country'). And, reflecting in particular on the experience of the Italian intellectuals, he notes that:

> Since every national complex is an often heterogeneous combination of elements, it may happen that its intellectuals, because of their cosmopolitanism, do not coincide with the national content, but with a content borrowed from other national complexes or even with a content that is abstract and cosmopolitan (1985: 205).

Gramsci's interests in place, space, and scale are combined in investigations on a wide range of topics. I cannot examine them all below but they include: (a) the social constitution of categories such as 'North-South' and 'East' and 'West', their reflection of the viewpoint European cultured classes, their ideological representation of differences between civilizations, and their material significance in practical life (Gramsci 1971: 810); (b) the strategic selectivities associated with the dissociation of scales across different institutional orders and/or the possibilities of scale jumping, e.g., the cosmopolitanism and external orientation of traditional intellectuals in Italy from Imperial Rome to the contemporary Catholic Church based in Rome and their impact of Italian and European politics; (c) the medieval communes and their economic-corporate urban regimes; (d) relationships between town/city and countryside and their geographical modalities in different countries; (e) the tangled hierarchy of scales as a source of economic, political, and socio-economic instability (e.g., Piedmont); (f) new forms of interscalar articulation to form a new historic bloc and mobilize multiple social forces (e.g., in order to resolve the Southern Question); (g) the reconstruction of scale in response to the crisis of liberalism, dependent development and internal colonialism, and the rise of Americanism and Fordism; (h) imperialism and imperialist rivalries within the context of a hierarchy of advanced capitalist, semi-advanced, and peripheral capitalist states (e.g., England and Germany, France and Czechoslovakia, and Italy respectively (Ghosh 2001: 3-4); and (j) the possibility of revolution in advanced capitalist states (the 'West') following the Russian Revolution (in the 'East'). More generally, Gramsci was interested in the relative coherence of different scales of economic and political organization and their social and cultural presuppositions. For example, in a familiar argument in Marxist analyses of the world market and imperialism, Gramsci remarks that:

> One of the fundamental contradictions is this: that whereas economic life has internationalism, or better still cosmopolitanism, as a necessary premiss, state life has developed ever more in the direction of 'nationalism', of 'self-sufficiency' and so on (1995: 353).

Gramsci and the Southern Question

The Southern Question was posed in many ways as a central problem in Italian state- and nation-building. Gramsci analyses these twin processes in terms of the 'passive revolution' that occurred as the Italian northern bourgeoisie sought to unify the peninsular in the face of a heterogeneous and divided population and vast regional disparities (Davis 1982; Morera 1990: 149). Italy's weak economic, political, and social integration and the lack of dominance of the national scale inform Gramsci's early political writings, the 'Lyons Theses' (co-authored with Togliatti), and his incomplete essay on 'Some Aspects of the Southern Question' (1926). These discuss three issues: (a) the complex, multi-layered economic and political subordination of secondary centres of accumulation to the north and their implications for class alliances; (b) the resulting complexities of class formation and regional disparities structures that block a Jacobin road to national unification; and (c) the problems this poses for the leading role of the proletariat, which is 'a minority of the working population and geographically distributed in such a manner, that it cannot presume to lead a victorious struggle for power unless it has previously resolved very precisely the problem of its relations with the peasant class' (1977: 329). Thus, in their *Lyons Theses*, Gramsci and Togliatti write:

> Industrialism, which is the essential part of capitalism, is very weak in Italy. Its possibilities for development are limited, both because of the geographical situation and because of the lack of raw materials. It therefore does not succeed in absorbing the majority of the Italian population (4 million industrial workers exist side by side with 3½ million agricultural workers and 4 million peasants). To industrialism, there is counterposed an agriculture which naturally presents itself as the basis of the country's economy. The extremely

> varied conditions of the terrain, and the resulting differences in cultivation and in systems of tenancy, however, cause a high degree of differentiation among the rural strata, with a prevalence of poor strata, nearer to the conditions of the proletariat and more liable to be influenced by it and accept its leadership. Between the industrial and agrarian classes, there lies a fairly extensive urban petty bourgeoisie, which is of very great significance. It consists mainly of artisans, professional men and State employees (1978: 343).

Gramsci takes this theme up again in his essay on the Southern Question. He claims that the capacity of the Italian proletariat, which is a minority class and geographically concentrated in the north, to become the leading (*dirigente*) and dominant class depends on its capacity to form class alliances, mobilizing in particular the real consent and active support of the broad peasant masses (1978; 1977: 328-9). But he adds the peasant question is historically determined in Italy; it is not the "peasant and agrarian question in general". In Italy the peasant question, through the specific Italian tradition, and the specific development of Italian history, has taken two typical and particular forms – the Vatican and Southern Questions (1978: 443; cf. 1977: 328-9).

This argument, his earlier analyses, and his *Prison Notebooks* all involve a deeply spatialized rather than a-spatial analysis of classes, social categories, and political forces. Gramsci identified five forces crucial forces in postwar Italy: (1) the northern urban force; (2) the southern rural force; (3) the northern/central rural force; (4) the rural force of Sicily; and (5) the rural force of Sardinia. And, on this basis, he analyzed the inter-regional relations on the analogy of a train whose engine would be the northern urban force (cf. Morera 1990: 89). The key question then becomes which other forces should be mobilized by this locomotive to effect a rapid and successful path to communism. Accordingly he recommended that the communist party promote a hegemonic alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry and petty-bourgeois intellectuals and lead them in a war of position before the final military-political resolution of the conflict. This would dissolve the defensive alliance between northern industrialists and southern landowners, which also benefited from rural and urban petty-bourgeois support.

Gramsci on Americanism and Fordism

Gramsci's vernacular materialism significantly frames his views on economic issues. Rejecting classical and vulgar political economy as well economic liberalism and economistic Marxism, he emphasized the broad historical location and specific spatio-temporal specificities of economic organization and economic regularities. This is why he substituted the notion of *mercato determinato* (definite forms of organizing and regulating market relations with associated laws of tendency) for transhistorical economic analysis based on the actions of rational economic man. Thus he explored dependent development in the *Mezzogiorno* and the general tendency towards internal colonialism in Italy; the interrelations between different economic places and spaces, including geographical variations in relationships between town and country and how different parties aimed to remodel this relationship (Gramsci 1971 269); and the interconnection, articulation, and real or potential tensions between local, regional, national, international and transnational economies. He was well-attuned to the spatial division of labour, the importance of scale in an emerging world market, and the conflict between place and space. And he analyzed the class relations that follow from the spatiality of economic organization. In short, as Morera, an acute interpreter of Gramsci's 'absolute historicism', argues 'Gramsci not only rejected sociology for abstracting from time conditions, but also from space. That is, from the geographical conditions of social processes' (Morera 1990: 89).

Turning to international economic relations, he attacked liberalism for taking the nation-state as its horizon of economic policy-making and assuming that the world economy could safely be left to market regulation (Vacca 1997: 160). Gramsci remarked upon the growing contradiction between cosmopolitanism in the world market and the nationalism of political life – which has to be the starting point for any move to internationalism in the revolutionary socialist movement. Gramsci was interested in the dynamics of uneven and combined development in an emerging global capitalism. His notes on Americanism and Fordism explored how the centre of economic dynamism was moving from old Europe to the United States and was prompting Europe to adapt. He did not adopt a narrowly economically-determinist view of American economic progress – let alone a simplistic technological

determinism. Instead he examined the specific historical and material conditions that had enabled a new techno-economic paradigm to develop there, including the establishment of an *economia programmatica* at the level of the enterprise, the factory town, and the wider society. The originality and significance of Fordism as accumulation regime, mode of regulation, and way of life hindered its diffusion to Europe because this required more than the export of technical means of production and a technical division of labour. Nonetheless, to the extent that it did spread to Europe, it also facilitated the hegemony of American imperialism.

In contrast to the Comintern, Gramsci emphasized the shift in the centre of economic gravity from Europe to the USA, which had developed a more rationally organized economy. If workers could take the lead in adopting this model, it could become the basis for working class to guide world historical development (Vacca 1999: 9; Baratta 1997). But he also asked prophetically whether the centre of gravity might shift again, this time from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

> The largest masses of the world's population are in the Pacific. If China and India were to become modern nations with great volumes of industrial production, their consequent detachment from a dependency on Europe would in fact rupture the current equilibrium: transformation of the American continent, shift in the axis of American life from the Atlantic to the Pacific seaboard, etc. (1971: 326)

Gramsci on Territoriality and the State

Gramsci did not naturalize or fetishize national territory as the pre-given or pre-destined basis of state formation – and could not have done, indeed, given the historical problems of nation formation that he recognized and that he also struggled to overcome. The territorialization of political power is a crucial first material step in national state formation and nation building.[3] It is unsurprising, then, that Gramsci studied the problems of the transition from medieval communes to absolutism and thence to a bourgeois liberal democratic state (e.g., Italy vs the Netherlands) and the need to break out of the economic-corporate phase with its political fragmentation. "The chief defect of previous Italian history was not class oppression but the

absence of definite class formation, due to the fact that ‘in Italy political, territorial and national unity enjoy a scanty tradition (or perhaps no tradition at all)’ (Gramsci 1971 274). Gramsci was also aware that territorial unity did not itself ensure political unity. This is apparent in his contrast between Bodin and Machiavelli:

> Bodin lays the foundations of political science in France on a terrain which is far more advanced and complex than that which Italy offered to Machiavelli. For Bodin the question is not that of founding the territorially united (national) State – i.e., of going back to the time of Louis XI – but of balancing the conflicting social forces within this already strong and well-implanted State. Bodin is interested in the moment of consent, not in the moment of force (Gramsci 1971: 344)

Securing political unity also requires the institutional integration of the state through appropriate state forms, its embedding in the wider ensemble of societal relations, and its capacity to engage in relatively unified action through appropriate state and national-popular projects. As symptoms of a failed national unification project in Italy, he regularly cited the Vatican and Southern Questions and the passive revolution that occurred under the domination of Piedmont and the Moderate Party. And, in one of his most famous comparisons in state theory, he claims that:

> ‘In the East the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed’ (1971: 000).

This approach raised crucial issues concerning passive revolution, hegemony, and the historical bloc. Gramsci provides many other examples of problems in the mechanisms in and through which political unity is created and identifies an enormous variability in its forms – ranging from sheer coercion through force-fraud-corruption and passive revolution to an inclusive hegemony. Nor did he see this mainly as a question of public administration or reform of the state apparatus – it was deeply related to the social bases of the state. He therefore introduced a rich conceptual instrumentarium for analyzing class relations: ruling class, governing

class, governing party, class in charge of the state, the political class, functionaries as an intermediary stratum with the task of linking people and state, subaltern classes, class alliance, class compromise, and so forth.

Moreover, in developing his analyses, he did not regard classes as disembedded, free-floating entities but noted the impact of their spatial as well as social roots. This in turn implies the spatiality as well as the historicity of the state as a social relation.

> The chief defect of Italian intellectuals was not that they formed a powerful and resilient ‘‘cultural hegemony’’, but that, because they were cosmopolitan rather than national, no authentic hegemony had ever been realised. Like the artificial or perverted state hegemony of Piedmont, the cultural tradition deriving from the Renaissance humanists could provide only a weak and eccentric form of hegemony, because it was not national’ (Ghosh 2001: 36).

Gramsci and International Relations

Although Gramsci regrets the failure of the Italian nation-state compared with France’s successful Jacobin state-building project, he is well aware that even this took decades to accomplish and that contemporary nation-states were being forged in a much changed and deeply contested international context. For example, he suggests that, whereas Versailles re-established the prerogatives of nation-states, the Bolshevik world revolution project aimed at an eventual society of nations. After Versailles, the nation could no longer remain, if it ever had fully been, the dominant horizon of state life. Thus it was crucial to analyze how the internal balance of forces was overdetermined by international forces and a country’s geo-political position and to assess whether and how the latter balance modifies domestic forces, reinforcing or breaking progressive and revolutionary movements (Gramsci 1971: 304). He therefore deemed it ‘necessary to take into account the fact that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations’ (1971: 406). He also noted that winning international hegemony was partly an educational relationship, affecting complexes of national and continental civilizations (1971: 666). This applied not only

to Americanism and Fordism but also to the role of the international communist movement and its involvement in united front activities.

When exploring the international dimensions of economic, political, and socio-cultural relations, Gramsci did not assume that the basic units of international relations were national economies, national states, or nationally-constituted civil societies. Thus he saw the Vatican not just as a local religious institution but, as a form of religious imperialism, a worldwide hegemonic institution (Gramsci 1985: 220-1; Saunders 1998: 181). More generally, he explored the mutual implications of nested scales of economic and political organization, their social and cultural presuppositions, and the consequences of the dissociation of the dominant scales of economic and political life. This made him sensitive to the complexities of interscalar relations and he never assumed that they were ordered in a simple nested hierarchy.

Gramsci's approach to international relations is interesting for six reasons. First, in whereas Marx mainly developed an abstract-simple analysis of the capitalist mode of production, Gramsci took this analysis for granted and focused instead on concrete conjunctures in emerging and developed capitalist social formations in a world shaped by imperialism and the Bolshevik Revolution. Second, Gramsci integrated his analysis of base and superstructure with concrete political analyses. This was a key element in his concept of historical bloc and his systematic concern with the role of intellectuals in mediating these relations (see, for example, Portelli 1972). This analysis extended beyond the national scale to the international (e.g., his analyses of Americanism and Fordism and its diffusion in Europe or his concern with the Bolshevik Revolution's failure to spread from the 'East' to the 'West'). Third, in opposing economism both theoretically and politically, Gramsci showed the role of political and civil society in constituting and reproducing economic relations on scales up to and including the international. Fourth, in contrast to (neo-)realism in more recent international relations theory, Gramsci did not fetishize the nation-state as the basic unit or scale of analysis. Indeed his work could be interpreted as a protracted reflection on 'the failure of the Italian state to constitute itself as a national state – a failure that reflects the laborious emergence of a modern Italian nation, impeded by a balance of internal and international forces' (1985: 335).

Fifth, writing during and after the Great War with its inter-imperialist rivalries and open hostility between the capitalist bloc and the fledgling Soviet Union, Gramsci was especially concerned with two issues: (a) the international as well as national and regional context of the defeat of the working class movement and the rise of fascism; and (b) the spread of Americanism and Fordism as the basis for modernization in Italy and Europe more generally. Thus, in contrast to the Comintern, Gramsci emphasized the shift in the centre of economic gravity from Europe to the USA, which had developed a more rationally organized economy, which could in turn become the basis for working class to guide world historical development (Vacca 2000: 9; Baratta 1997). Sixth, he was strongly interested in international relations and studied work on geo-politics and demo-politics (which would now be called bio-politics) to better understand the political implications of the international balance of forces.

In this context, and in contrast to the methodological nationalism that still affects much thinking on international relations, Gramsci did not draw a rigid distinction between the national and the international but explored issues of interscalar articulation and reciprocal influence in a more complex and dialectical manner.

> ‘Do international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure, through its technical-military expressions, modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field too. Even the geographical position of a national State does not precede but follows (logically) structural changes, although it also reacts back upon them to a certain extent (to the extent precisely to which superstructures react upon the structure, politics on economics, etc.). However, international relations react both passively and actively on political relations (of hegemony among the parties)’ (1971: 398)
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Gramsci explores the links between economic, political, and international strategy in his analysis of the inter-linkage between domestic class alliances and foreign economic policy. Italy’s ruling class had to choose between rural democracy based on ‘an alliance with the Southern peasants, a policy of free trade, universal suffrage,

administrative decentralization and low prices for industrial products'; or 'a capitalist/worker industrial bloc, without universal suffrage, with tariff barriers, with the maintenance of a highly centralized State (the expression of bourgeois dominion over the peasants, especially in the South and the Islands), and with a reformist policy on wages and trade–union freedoms' (1978: 607). As Gramsci then immediately added, it was no accident that the ruling class chose the latter solution.

Conclusions

Gramsci not only emphasized the *historical specificity* of all social relations but was also less explicitly attuned to their distinctive *location in place, space, and scale.* Thus almost all of his crucial concepts are sensitive to issues of place, space, and scale as well as to issues of periodization, historical structures, specific conjunctures, and social dynamics. Whether we consider the relations of production, the determined market (*mercato determinato*), the contrast between the dynamism of Americanism and Fordism and the relative stagnation of European and Soviet planned economies, the forms of class relations (economically, politically, intellectually), the territoriality of state formation and the relative strengths or weakness of specific states (considered both in terms of political and civil society), the spatial roots of intellectuals and their different functions in economic, political, and moral organization, the nature of political alliances, the appropriate forms of economic-corporate, political, and military strategy, etc., Gramsci emerges as a spatial thinker as much as he does as an historical thinker. This is rooted in his profoundly historicist concern with the spatio-temporality of all social relations. In addition, Gramsci's analysis of strategy was objectively as well as metaphorically sensitive to temporality and spatiality. Not only did Gramsci emphasize the interweaving of different temporalities into complex conjunctures and situations and search for the openings between a path-dependent present and possible futures. But he also regarded strategy as inherently spatial. He was always aware of the need to mobilize in and across specific places, spaces, and scales, each with their own distinctive determinations and strategic selectivities. At stake in both cases is the transformation of spatio-temporal horizons of action and the interweaving of different temporalities and spatialities. It is only in this context that his notions of war of position and war of manoeuvre make sense. For Gramsci's interest in place, space,

and scale was not merely academic but had to do with his analysis of revolutionary conjunctures. Thus he argues that a collective will must be formed 'with the degree necessary and sufficient to achieve an action which is co-ordinated and simultaneous in the time and the geographical space in which the historical event takes place' (1971 426-7). In short, his comments on the political failures of left strategy are also spatially as well as historically attuned.

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East/West Morphology of the State
North/South Popular Cosmology
War of Position
War of Manoeuvre
Base
Superstructure
Historical Bloc
Hegemonic Bloc
Molecular Transformation
Passive Revolution
United Front
Vanguard
Trenches, Bulwarks, Outer Perimeter

Box One: Some Spatial Metaphors in Gramsci

Endnotes

[1] For Said, Gramsci offered ‘an essentially geographical, territorial apprehension of human history and society … far more than Lukács he was political in the practical sense, conceiving of politics as a contest over territory, both actual and historical, to be won, fought over, controlled, held, lost, gained’ (2001: 464).

[2] While Gramsci argues that natural resources and landscapes constrain as well as facilitate social practice, this does not involve monocausal determinism. Indeed, as Pandolfi notes, his 'vision of territory differed from the dangerous and arrogant categorizations of some proponents of the Southern Question, and he was careful to dissociate himself from their essentialism. Such geographical determinisms … only legitimated the authoritarian and imperialistic stances of the North. Rather, territoriality was a political perimeter; it referred to a peripheral place subject to imperial and strategic domination by the center' (1998: 286).

[3] Gramsci notes how Rudolf Kjellén, a Swedish sociologist, sought to ‘construct a science of the state and of politics on a new basis, taking as his starting point the territorial unit as organised politically (development of the geographical sciences—physical geography, anthropography, geo-politics) and the mass of human beings living in society on that territory (geo-politics and demopolitics)’ (1995: 325).